

# Up a Lazy River: The Village and Town Cancellations of The Gambia

The West African river nation of The Gambia seems to be the land for which the term “back water” was created. Three hundred miles of river running east to west and less than 4,400 square miles of land (essentially averaging 7.5 miles north or south of the river). There is little land transportation, few roads and no railroad. Mail within Gambia moved primarily on boats. The world’s only exclusively river-based “travelling post office” was established in 1922. But even prior to that time, mail from the up-river villages and towns moved to the capitol of Bathurst by boat. Indeed, the Government provided the *Wilberforce* as the first river boat to carry mail in 1846.

## The Gambia



In order to examine the village and town cancellations of The Gambia, let’s take an imaginary “journey” up river. Seen below is the very rare Jawarra CDS, a nearly complete strike on stamp. Our journey begins all the way up river to the eastern-most postal village of Fattoto. We’ll then work our way down river, eventually stopping at the town of Jessadi to examine a very special cover: the ***only known usage of the Jessadi canceller on cover!*** We will examine an early up-river cover antedating the establishment of the Traveling Post Office (TPO). Finally, we will look at the TPO cancellations themselves before arriving in the capitol, the port town of Bathurst (now Banjul). Along the way, I’ll discuss the anatomy of each cover: the type of mail, rates, routes, anomalies, significance of addressees and the cancellations & transit marks themselves.

## Table of Contents to the Exhibit

| Page | Cancellation      | Contents  |
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| 1.   | Jawarra           | Title Page - Rare usage on stamp  |
| 2.   | Fattoto           | Registered to England   |
| 3.   | “Up River”        | Registered with “killers”   |
| 4.   | Basse             | 3 different usages  |
| 5.   | Bansang           | 2 different usages  |
| 6.   | Macarthy Island   | Early airmail usage   |
| 7.   | Georgetown        | Rare “Wireless Station” on stamp<br>Scarce registered usage                     |
| 8.   | Kunta Ur          | Uncommon commercial usage   |
| 9.   | Jessadi           | Only known usage on cover   |
| 10.  | Kau-Ur            | 2 different usages to same recipient in US                                      |
| 11.  | Mansa Konko       | Registered UPU airmail usage to England   |
| 12.  | Gunjur<br>Brikama | Registered UPU airmail usage to England<br>Registered to England                |
| 13.  | Cape St Mary      | 3 covers to religious-based recipients  |
| 14.  | TPO # 1           | Scarce registered label & cover, commercial usage                               |
| 15.  | TPO # 2           | CDS with missing year slug<br>Redirected registered cover<br>“Inside-Out” Cover |
| 16.  | Bathurst          | “Per S.S. Nubia”  |

## Jawarra CDS



Very rare Circular Date Stamp. Date cancelled (18-Feb-1933) is 4 weeks before the final known usage for this cancellator. **Cancellation Known Used** 18-Dec-1932 to 18-Mar-1933, a total of only 15 months.